



Pushing open the door to Artspace, the visitor to *Imprint* was immediately forced to physically engage with Bianca Hester's work *Enabling Constraints* (2009). An installation of Besser brick walls was surrounded by a tangle of ropes strung with thin aluminium pipes, forming angular divisions in the space. Accompanying photographic and video documentation functioned as records of Hester's previous works but also as instructions for the viewer, ensuring the ongoing translation of these ephemeral pieces long after their original occurrence. It was this continuation that curator Anneke Jaspers sought to investigate in *Imprint*, along with the potential for what Jaspers termed the 'material residues of ephemeral practice'¹ to become the means for the regeneration of works that — in their performative element — had become lost to time.

Jaspers acknowledges that 'embodied engagement is subject to the filtering and fixing effects of representational modes'. Hester and the other artists in *Imprint* showed an awareness of this vulnerability through the multi-layered

construction of their works. Kathryn Gray's piece *Contingency plan* (2009) turned live interviews into script into performance into video. There was trickery in its presentation, which also echoed two of her choices for interview subjects — a magician and a private investigator. The identity of the subjects and the reality of the situations depicted were presented with dramatic paradox (using subtle visual plays like misplaced shadows, mismatched reflections and staggered subtitles which did not completely concur with the lips of the muted subjects). In this media and image saturated time when even popular reality television shows are widely acknowledged and accepted to be highly directed and staged, Gray's work presented original information as well as interpretations and manipulations of it, but crucially, gave the audience the opportunity to unfold the work and discover further dimensions to its imprint.

Anne Kay's *Unhistorical Facts* (2009), an arrangement of documentation relating to Aleks Danko's 1976 performance *Day to Day* had the

artist acting as a conduit, bringing recollections of Danko's work together in an almost museological setting. In *Day to Day* the artist was gagged, blindfolded and bound to a chair for an hour at six different locations and times. In *Unhistorical Facts*, a visitor could learn about it through facsimiles of the artist's notebooks, photographs, audio recollections and posthumous video of the performance sites, however the implied intensity and immediacy of a performance such as *Day to day* is difficult to experience through these means. With Kay's influence residing in the research and presentation of information rather than an overt contemporary re-interpretation, *Unhistorical Facts* seemed nostalgic.

Teaching and Learning Cinema (TLC), meanwhile, showed a reverence for the past but brought a record of the performance up to date. The transience of performance was recognised through TLC's project, a re-enactment of Expanded Cinema practitioner Guy Sherwin's 1976 piece *Man with Mirror*, as well as an accompanying brochure on how to perform the

work. In her exhibition statement Jaspers stated that 'an imprint is always relative, a contingent reference to something someplace else'.² This was quite literally shown through displacement of reflected images in *(Wo)man with Mirror* (2009). A Super 8 projection of the artist performing with a mirror (originally Sherwin but re-filmed for this work with TLC's Louise Curham and Lucas Ihlein) was superimposed onto the performer as they repeated the filmed actions with the mirror, reflecting and refracting the image onto themselves, each other, the audience and the space. TLC's was the work in the show to most prominently celebrate the act of performance as something to be perpetuated as well as archived, and their enthusiasm for the project translated through to make *(Wo)man with Mirror* the most vibrant contribution to *Imprint* despite the relatively modest technologies employed in its presentation.

If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound? If a performance artwork happened and no trace remains, did it really exist? The works in *Imprint* responded admirably to this dilemma, translating ephemeral practices into cogent new works. However the absence of the original acts left a deafening silence, so that perhaps the exhibition's greatest affirmation was that there is still definitely a place for process-based and performance work in contemporary Australian art.

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Endnotes

- 1 Anneke Jaspers, curator statement *Imprint* exhibition flyer, 2009.
- 2 Jaspers, *ibid.*



(above)
Bianca Hester
Enabling Constraints 2009
Installation view

(top right)
Anne Kay
Unhistorical Facts 2009
Installation view

(middle right)
Kathryn Gray
Contingency Plan 2009
Installation view

(bottom right)
Teaching and Learning Cinema (Louise Curham and Lucas Ihlein)
(Wo)man with Mirror 2009
Installation view